

This month's Sunday "Conversations…" in Brighton saw a different format. Beginning with the liturgy for the First Sunday of Advent, the community, residents and guests celebrated the 60 years of priesthood of Frs. Roland Guilmain, A.A., Aidan Furlong, A.A. and Theodore Fortier, A.A. and anticipated Fr. Norman Meiklejohn's 60th anniversary next year. Fr. Roland was the principal celebrant and Fr. Claude Grenache, A.A., superior of the house, was the homilist.

Following the liturgy, everyone gathered in the living room for a grand toast and a few shared memories.

The discussion for the morning, which quickly turned into and animated, lively sharing was the result of inviting folks to express their impressions and reflections on the impact of Pope Francis on them, the Church and the world.

Several folks began by commenting on the Pontiff's profound love for the poor, the marginalized and his stance on social justice issues. While this concern is at the heart of the gospel and always a concern of the Church, Pope Francis, as a Latin American church leader, is very intent on bringing this world reality to the fore of our consciences.

Others noted his passion in proclaiming the gospel, in light of the 'new evangelization' and entitling his recent apostolic exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel" with such fervor, that he has already touched the hearts of many people. He is challenging all of us, by his own example, to put the Good News into action, going beyond mere words. This can be quite disturbing and challenging to our complacency.

Someone else noted his position in the world not only as a spiritual leader but also as a political leader and one responsible for a huge institution, leaving him open to his share of detractors.

Pope Francis' pastoral style of leadership is what has affected people most personally, many believe. In these days of global communications, we see in pictures and hear in his talks and homilies, his sensitivity to the young, the sick, the disabled, folks of cultural and ethnic diversity, Christians, non-Christians and those who are hostile to any religion alike, are all in some way taking note of this Successor of Peter. And then there is his smile and gentle sense of humor! He seems to be 'expanding the definition of the papacy,' commented another person. Universally, all agreed that our first and foremost way of supporting our new Bishop of Rome is through prayer and taking to heart and action the living of the gospel joyfully with the help of God.

Please note the video clips of this morning's discussion are being posted on the website for the next few weeks.

Impressions and Reflections on Pope Francis - part 1